

school notes

COMPILED BY SUSAN BRAUN JOHNSON



St. Peter's School Blessing during Back-to-School week Photo: Sheila Walter Faison

St. Peter's Interparish School Reading Safari at St. Peter's

St. Peter's students marked the end of back-to-school week on Safari ["adventure" in Swahili]. Armed with school-issued visas and plane tickets to Kenya, St. Peter's students tried their hands at African drumming, weaving and dancing. The activities - including safari student photos, a safari book walk and a photo safari - were part of the annual St. Peter's summer reading celebration. In an effort to inspire reading, students (grades two through eight) who successfully read and prepared reports on at least four books during the summer break, were invited to attend the "Summer Safari" celebration. Led by the ever-popular school librarian Mrs. Barbara Ochmanek, the annual event is always a back-to-school highlight for St. Peter's students. This year participating grades boasted 97 percent participation! And of course, eighth-grade students took part in an

important right of passage - sitting in the dunk tank while students from the lower grades aimed to drench! St. Peter's students and families thank the Capitol Hill Community Foundation for a grant that partially funded "Traditional Expressions," the featured African drum and dance troupe.

Fall Open House

St. Peter's Fall Open House will be held on Nov. 3 from 9 - 11 a.m. Applications will be available, and prospective families are invited to tour the school and meet with faculty and parents. If you are interested in learning more about the school, please contact the school office at 202-544-1618 or visit www.stpetersinterparish.org. - Sally Aman

St. Anselm's St. Anselm's Prayer Labyrinth

St. Anselm's Abbey School was pleased to announce the installation of a prayer labyrinth on its campus

earlier this month. The labyrinth, which was built by St. Anselm's senior Benjamin Moniz, was blessed by school chaplain Fr. Michael Hall on Sept. 1, the first day back for students at the school.

The labyrinth is modeled after the famous prayer labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France, which dates to the 13th century. School Headmaster Louis Silvano said he hopes the students, monks and faculty of St. Anselm's will use the new labyrinth as a tool for personal reflection, prayer and meditation. "Unlike a maze, which is meant to be a challenge, this prayer labyrinth is meant to be walked slowly and deliberately," he said.

Moniz, one of 31 students in the St. Anselm's Class of 2010, constructed the labyrinth as his Eagle Scout project this summer. He is one of many St. Anselm's students to achieve Eagle Scout status in recent years.

Open House

St. Anselm's will be holding an Open House on Nov. 1 from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. The school is an independent, Roman Catholic school for academically gifted boys in grades 6 - 12. The 43-acre campus is located in NE Washington, about 15-20 minutes from Capitol Hill. For more information, please contact E.V. Downey, Director of admissions, at admissions@saintanselms.org or 202-269-2379.

Maury Elementary Thinking Locally, Acting Locally

Fresh Produce Snacks

Maury was selected to be part of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the 2009- 2010 school year. Thanks to the efforts of a team of

parents, staff and the Farm to School coordinator for bringing this about. All Maury students will have fresh produce snacks for the entire school year. These snacks will be served in addition to the breakfast and lunch programs, and the program is being coordinated through Chartwells, the DCPS food service vendor. Maury's application emphasized offering fresh, local produce complemented with nutrition education. Our grant also included cooking demonstrations and nutrition education activities centered on the fresh produce snacks, and we look forward to working with teachers and parents on the best ways to integrate nutrition education into the classroom and introduce this program to students. - Kristina Vidal.

Power Hour Volunteer Rally

Maury parents orchestrated an event to make it easy for Hill-ites to sign up as school volunteers. On Sept. 12 they offered TB tests in front of Port City Java, followed by test results and DCPS fingerprinting at Maury Elementary (1250 Const. Ave., NE) on Sept. 14. Once cleared, volunteers are able to volunteer with any DC public school. CHAMPS has partnered with Maury parents and teachers to create Power Hour, an organized volunteer program that is designed to link the business community with the school. All it takes is one hour per week in your choice of activity at Maury. You can be a Storybook Superstar! Read to a child in grade 2 or younger. Help build those crucial early literacy skills by simply reading a few storybooks each week to a beginning reader. Be a Homework Hero! Help a child in grades 3 through 5 complete his/her class work. Or go with Lunchroom Lieutenant or Recess Ranger! Help the



Maury Principal Carolyn Albert-Garvey at the Power Hour Volunteer Rally.

younger children open their lunches, chat with the older kids, zip up the little ones before they head to the playground. Play! For more information, visit www.mauryelementary.com or call the school at 202 698-3838 to sign up. - Heather Schoell.

Brent Elementary Brent Students Welcome New Science Teacher

Students at Robert Brent Elementary School – the only Capitol Hill DCPS elementary museum

magnet school –welcomed a new science teacher – Mike Mangiaracina.

Mr. Mangiaracina, who has 15 years teaching experience, earned a bachelor's degree from St. John's College and holds master's degree in elementary education from George Washington University.

"Mr. Mike is doing a great job with all of our students," said Dr. Cheryl Wilhoyte, Brent's principal. "Our children are receiving an enhanced science program that supports Brent's global education program



Brent 3rd graders participate in a scavenger hunt for plants, animals and green other features.

and they are learning that science can also be so much fun." Under Mr. Mangiaracina's leadership, Brent students are participating in a Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center project, where students are paired with a sister school in Jardin, Colombia for a multi-faceted study of migratory birds. Students will study birds and bird migration in science, learn about Colombia in Social Studies, make collages of migratory birds in art class and they will write letters to Columbia students in their sister school as part of their writing lessons.

Student's letters will be translated into Spanish by parent volunteers and by volunteers from the Colombian Embassy. Later this fall, officials from the Colombian Embassy and an environmental educator from the Smithsonian's Migratory Bird Center will visit Ms. JoAnn Hill's 3rd-grade class.

Brent students to raise, release and track Monarch Butterflies

Brent Elementary recently received a \$2,500 grant from the U.S. Forest Service to raise Monarch Butterflies from caterpillars and tag and release them to the wild, in hopes of tracking their migration to Mexico this fall. Since the beginning of the school year, all students have cared for caterpillars in their rooms.

New Urban Birdy Club at Brent

Mr. Mangiaracina has also launched an after school bird watching club called Urban Birdy for the 3rd and 5th-grade students. The clubs will participate in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Celebrate Urban Birds" and "Project Pigeon Watch" programs. Students will identify local birds and then collect data for Cornell at regular intervals about the numbers and variety of birds on school grounds. "At the end of the project, we will have created a "yard list" of all the species we have seen on school grounds," said Mangiaracina.

Brent Fall Festival

Brent Elementary's annual Fall Fun Festival for children of all ages will take place Oct. 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The school is located at 301 North Carolina, SE. The festival will feature a wide variety of games; a

moon bounce, tasty treats, a bake sale, a book sale and children are encouraged to wear Halloween costumes. Families from across Capitol Hill are welcome to come join the fun.

Brent students remember Senator Kennedy

To celebrate the life of Senator Edward Kennedy, Brent student's held a ceremony and lowered the school's flag to half mast. For over 12 years, Senator Kennedy came to Brent on Tuesday's to read to students as part of the Everybody Wins reading and mentoring program, which matches members of Congress and their staffs with students. Brent 3rd Grader Larenai Swann, who was Senator Kennedy's reading buddy for two years, shared her special experience with him. - Angie Lundberg

Capitol Hill Cluster School Assistant Principal Sharia Shanklin Earns Doctoral Degree

The Capitol Hill Cluster School community congratulates Sharia Shanklin, Assistant Principal at the Cluster's Watkins Elementary campus, on receiving her Doctoral degree in Organizational and Educational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Shanklin, who already held Master's degrees in educational psychology and education administration, has been at the Cluster School since 2003. She has been the driving force behind the school's highly successful three-campus Arts Integration program. In addition, she has responsibility for developing "professional learning communities" across the Cluster that will help teachers support continued gains in academic achievement by their students.

Dr. Shanklin has three children, all of whom attended DC Public schools. Her eldest daughter recently received her Bachelor's degree from Stanford University and is pursuing a graduate degree at the University of Maryland, while her son attended Morehouse College and is doing his graduate work at Princeton and her younger daughter recently began her first year at the Pratt Institute.



New Cluster School Assistant Principals Katie Franklin and Olutayo Ayodeji

Stuart-Hobson Welcomes New Assistant Principals

Mr. Olutayo Ayodeji brings 12 years of experience in education to Stuart-Hobson Middle School. He began his career at the Oak Hill Youth Center, a residential facility and school for court-involved District youth. He also has worked in the Prince George's County school system and at several charter schools in Ohio. In 2007, he earned a Master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of Toledo.

After completing his degree, he returned to Washington, D.C., a city he loves, to teach Language Arts at a charter school before joining the Stuart-Hobson staff in 2009. Although he's only been at the school a few weeks, Mr. Ayodeji says he "can see why parents and teachers are so passionate about Stuart-Hobson – it's a place with caring teachers and staff, high expectations across the board, and so many students looking for new opportunities to learn."

Ms. Katie Franklin, a second new Assistant Principal, is charged with managing the significant increase in student intervention services available at Stuart-Hobson this year. Ms. Franklin received her BA in Political Science from Rhodes College in Memphis and her Master's in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She began her career in education as a third grade teacher at Hardin Elementary

School in New Orleans.

Since 2004, Ms. Franklin has worked here in the neighborhood as a staff member at the Ward 6 Higher Achievement Program, which provides after-school and summer academic enrichment to students

at Stuart-Hobson and elsewhere. Ms. Franklin says she is honored to be part of the administration team at Stuart-Hobson because, "throughout my years of working in the Ward 6 community, I have always been impressed with the students, faculty, staff, and families at the Cluster."

Peabody Welcomes former Parent/Aide Back as Teacher

Following what has become a tradition at the Cluster's Peabody Early Childhood campus of former parents returning to the school to teach, Alysia Scofield, whose daughter and son went through the School-Within-School program on the third floor and now attend Stuart-Hobson and Watkins respectively, has just begun her first year as a Kindergarten teacher in the Reggio Emilio-inspired program. She studied the Reggio Emilio method on the job, working as an aide to both former lead teacher Sarah Burke and later current lead teacher John Burst for several

years. She is currently working on her Master's in education, with a focus on early childhood education.

In addition, Peabody welcomes the following new staff members: Marnie Jones, Special Education Teacher; Danielle Keemer Edmond, Speech Therapist; Lateffa King, Special Education Coordinator; Rebecca Whitmore, Social Worker; and Asa Davis and Lisa Maioriello, Paraprofessionals.

For more information on what's happening at the Cluster School, log on to: www.capitolhillclusterschool.org. - Karen Bates.

River Park Nursery School

Fall is in full swing at River Park Nursery School. The students are looking forward to their first field trip to the FDR memorial and are planning a special project featuring Roosevelt's dog, Fala. Other fun programs and activities are planned throughout the year, including the Fall Yard sale at Eastern Market and



Students from River Park Nursery school pause for a photo.



Prince Zeif Ra'ad, Principal Carolyn Cobbs, Chancellor Michelle Rhee; Photo by Rachel Klein.

the annual Sock Hop.

RPNS is in its 46th year of operation, providing an exceptional environment in which 3-5 year olds can grow, learn, and explore. The nursery school is located at 212 East Capitol Street SE. With a total class size of just 10-15 students, RPNS Director Miss Bernadette and assistant teacher Miss Natalie are able to offer highly individualized attention. The school operates with 3, 4, or 5 day programs from 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. from Sept. through May. For more information on RPNS, please visit the school's website at www.riverparknurseryschool.org/.

– Suzanne Nelson.

Ludlow-Taylor Elementary Prince Zeid Ra'ad Comes to Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School

The Jordanian Ambassador, His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad, came with his embassy diplomats and staff to Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School on Aug. 21, to help with DC Public School's Beautification day, which was the following Saturday.

Throughout the day, with Chancellor Michelle Rhee in attendance, the volunteers gardened, weeded, pruned and washed windows, at one point requesting a taller ladder to reach the third-floor panes. According to Donny Kirsch, parent of a pre-K student, who helped coordinate this event, when the volunteers were asked if they wanted "hard work or re-

ally hard work" they answered "really hard work." According to Mr. Kirsch, no one worked harder than the ambassador himself.

Ludlow-Taylor went through some major renovations during the summer. Many classrooms were painted, and wi-fi was installed. A dozen teachers came to school with nothing in their rooms and only one day to get organized, so volunteers also helped these teachers put their rooms in order.

The catalyst behind this effort, as stated in an August 20 press release from the Embassy of Jordan, was the "commemoration of two distinct historic occasions, the tenth anniversary of His Majesty King Abdullah II's Accession to the Throne and sixty years of diplomatic relations with the United States of America." The press release further states that this effort was "inspired by both His Majesty King Abdullah II and Her Majesty Queen Rania's leadership in promoting education, empowering the youth and encouraging the spirit of volunteerism..."

Not only did the embassy provide a full day of volunteer labor, it also donated \$17,000 to Ludlow-Taylor for landscaping and playground equipment. All of this cannot help but remind us that one of the five pillars of Islam is charity.

Ludlow-Taylor has been designated as a new Arts-Integration catalyst school. It has new programs for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds, a dynamic principal, new



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CHDS Grade 6 archaeologists search for evidence of past cultures at Mt. Calvert.
 Photo: Lisa Sommers.

playground equipment, and it has added terrific new staff. Ludlow-Taylor rocks!

Capitol Hill Day School Students Tackle Ancient and Modern History

Q:The Ustyurt Plateau lies between the Caspian and Aral Seas in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and what other country?

If you were a 6th, 7th or 8th grade student at Capitol Hill Day School, this is the National Geographic Question of the week that faced you as you opened your history teacher’s current events website. Beth Gryczewski (“Ms. G”) designed and created a website for her students that include links to selected current events, assignments and deadlines, and weekly questions like the one above.

Sixth-grade history students discuss early civilizations, from the earliest beginnings in Africa to ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, including their major political, economic, religious, social, and artistic achievements. How does a current events website fit into these topics? These “thinking questions” posted by Ms. G during the first week of School give you some idea of how the class weaves together the ancient and modern worlds:

- How do we learn about the past?

- What makes us human?
- What is a civilization?
- What causes a civilization to emerge?
- What makes it advanced?

Naturally, if you are studying ancient civilizations, you need to understand the role archaeology has played in revealing the details of these cultures. Thus, CHDS 6th graders traveled to Mount Calvert Historical and Archaeological Park. This site represents 8,000 years of American Indian, Euro-American, and African-American culture. Since 1996, archaeologists there have been piecing together images of life at Mount Calvert. Sixth graders learned about the site’s history, examined and interpreted artifacts found there, observed the dig in progress, and worked with the archaeologists at the dig site.

Seventh graders are studying the fall of the Roman Empire and Europe during the Middle Ages, and will move on to learn about the Spice Trade, the Silk Road, and the rise of Islam and its worldwide impact. Eighth graders focus on American history, starting with the birth of the United States and the debate about its new Constitution, and continuing up to the present day, including an examination of the Civil War, westward expansion, industrialization, the World Wars and Great Depression, civil rights,

and the Cold War. Some “thinking questions” for 8th -graders include: What is Democracy? What is the role of government? What is the role of the U.S. in the world? What is justice? And the answer to the initial question is: Uzbekistan.
- Jane Angarola.

**J.O. Wilson Elementary
Welcoming a New
Assistant Principal**

There are a lot of new faces at J.O. Wilson this fall! Last year, we had 42 staff members and this year the number has jumped to 54 – including our new Assistant Principal, Mrs. Tammy Thomas-Weems, two full-time social workers, a new counselor, two new teaching fellows, a new special education coordinator and additional classroom aides.

J.O. made its annual yearly progress (AYP) goals again – and with an impressive 5 point gain in math. Mr. Martinez continues to lead an amazing French program for students in all grade levels.

In addition to updates from inside the school, students are enjoying the new Outdoor Recreation Grounds, including three playground structures, a multi-purpose field, basketball courts, outdoor classroom and kitchen garden.

And we continue to enjoy several business and community partnerships that benefit J.O. Wilson students - a big thank you to our newest partner, the National Gallery of Art! - Nancy Rothgerber.

**DCPS
Annual Equalization
Process Begins**

Recently Mayor Adrian M. Fenty and Chancellor Michelle Rhee announced the beginning of the annual equalization process, part of the administration’s continued efforts to right-size District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). While nearly 45,000 students are enrolled across the system, equalization ensures that resources are distributed equitably by making necessary adjustments for schools that exceeded their projected enrollment and for others that are under-enrolled.

Each year this process enables DCPS to increase or decrease individual school budgets to align staffing and other resources to actual student enrollment. For the 2009-2010 school year DCPS must also adjust funding to reflect budget reductions made this summer by the D.C. Council to DCPS and the Public Charter Schools.

“We’re doing everything possible to balance unprecedented budget pressures with the needs of school communities,” said Mayor Fenty. “Our students are our priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that budget reductions do not affect the quality of academic programming.”

Principals received their preliminary budget adjustment, and letters were sent home to parents and staff members in September. Principals spent the remainder of the month working with instructional superintendents and their school communities to determine the budget adjustments that best meet their needs.

Equalization coupled with the Council budget reduction will have an impact across the district. The Central Office will absorb the cut to the maximum extent possible; however, a reduction of this magnitude will also directly affect schools.

Over the past two years, as part of the administration’s continuing efforts to right-size the school district, DCPS has pushed as much funding as possible out to school budgets. Because the single greatest expenditure in schools is personnel, as a result, DCPS must conduct a reduction-in-force (RIF) which will be implemented consistent with the requirements of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR).

“The unanticipated budget shortfall will be challenging. No budget reduction is taken lightly, but every school reduction will be made in the best interest of students,” said Chancellor Rhee. “There will be no disruption to major programs or offerings, and we will continue to work tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition for all of our staff, students and schools.”



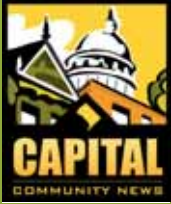
Prudential Realtor and Hill resident John Smith depends on the Hill Rag to get the word out about his residential listings as well as keep up with Ward 6 news.

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School Daze

A Little Homework Can Make Saving For College A Lot Easier

BY HOWARD PRESSMAN, CFP®

The first rule of saving for college is to save early and save often. Procrastination is the enemy, and so is inflation. According to the College Board, costs at four year, public colleges rose 5.9% in 2007 to \$13,589 per year. What's that going to cost you in 16 years? Are you sure you want to know? Okay, fine, it's about \$34,000. Multiply that by four and you're looking at \$136,000! Sounds terrible, right? Well it is. But if we start early, we can make this seemingly insurmountable expense a bit more manageable. In fact, if we assume a 7% rate of return over the 16 years, \$400 a month should cover it. If you wait another five years to start your savings, plan on kicking in \$680 a month. For those of you with older kids, it's never too late. Start saving something, anything. Take advantage of compounding returns and whatever time you have left. Visit www.savingforcollege.com/college-savings-calculator/ for a good calculator to help you plan.

All the Cool Kids Are Doing It

Let's turn our attention to where we're going to put all of this dough. If you're saving for college, a 529 Plan is an excellent choice. These accounts, named after the IRS code that makes them possible come in two flavors, a College Savings Plan and a Pre-Paid Tuition Plan. Pre-Paid Tuition Plans allow you to purchase tuition credits at today's rates, and then use them in the future. As such, your maximum growth will equal the increase in tuition from when you buy the credits to when you use them. By contrast, College Savings Plans allow you to invest in a variety of mutual funds, and your performance will depend on the performance of the

funds you've selected. While inside the College Savings Plan, your money will grow tax deferred and even better, can be withdrawn tax free if used for qualified higher education expenses (QHEE). QHEE typically include: tuition, rooming, books and supplies. Pre-Paid Tuition plans usually cover tuition only, so you'll still need to come out of pocket for the rest.

529 plans are state specific, and while you're not required to use your state's plan, there are tax incentives to do so. In DC, you can deduct up to \$4,000 per account owner, per beneficiary from your DC taxes. Federal gifting rules limit contributions to \$12,000 (\$24,000 for couples filing jointly) per year, per beneficiary. Using your state's savings plan does not limit your child to in-state schools. Funds can be used at any school eligible for federal funding, including some outside the US. Pre-paid tuition plans, on the other hand, may limit you to in-state schools. They have cancellation options, but they're not very generous. The tax incentives don't mean you should automatically use your state's plan. You'll want to explore other plans

as there can be significant differences in fees, investment offerings and quality between states. I recommend doing some homework before committing your money. A great place to begin is www.Savingforcollege.com. You can find more information on the DC plan at www.DCCollegesavings.com.

What Do You Mean I'm Not the Most Popular?

While 529s are the most popular college savings vehicles, they're certainly not your only choice. Custodial accounts, sometimes called UTMA or UGMA accounts are also popular. Basically these are accounts opened in your kid's name on which you are the custodian. Once your child reaches 18 years of age, the account becomes theirs, until then you make all of the decisions. It is important to note that upon turning 18, your child legally can do with this money as they wish. If they decide to blow the whole wad on a Beemer, there's not a lot you can do about it. Custodial accounts can be bank accounts, CDs or investment accounts. So you can pick the investment that best suits your objectives and time

frame. Since these accounts are in the child's name, taxes are calculated using their tax rates. Also, funds in these accounts can be used for pretty much anything, including private school.

Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESA) are also fairly popular. Contributions to any one beneficiary can't exceed \$2000 per year. There are no tax deductions for your contributions, but deposits grow tax deferred and can be withdrawn tax free if used for education expenses. These expenses can include elementary and secondary school as well as college.

Less popular but still options are US Savings Bonds and Roth IRAs. Interest on Savings Bonds can be tax free if used for QHEE, provided the bond was owned by the parent who purchased it when they were at least 24 years old. Income limitations apply, so be sure to check the rules. Since contributions to Roth IRAs can be withdrawn, tax free at any time, you could use them to pay for education expenses too. Just be sure not to exceed your contributions and tap your earnings. If you withdraw earnings, provided they're for QHEE you won't owe the 10% penalty tax, but you will owe income taxes.

In-State, Out-of-State, There's No Difference

Let's shift gears for a moment and talk about how great it is to live in the District. Sure our public school system leaves something to be desired and parking stinks, but guess what? DC residents pay in-state tuition at any public school in the US. That's a nice deal, yeah? The program called DCTAG (Tuition Assistance Grant) covers the difference between in-state



and out-of-state tuition, up to \$10,000 at any public school in the country. You can learn more by visiting www.seo.dc.gov.

There's a lot more to know about the different education savings vehicles. Hopefully I've given you enough to get started, but I encourage you to do a little homework on your own, or consult with a trusted advisor. Remember, the best advice is to save early and save often.

Disclosures:


Investors should consider their investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses associated with municipal fund securities before investing. This information is found in the issuer's official statement and should be read carefully before investing.

Before investing, the investor should consider whether the investor's or beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other benefits available only from that state's 529 plan.

Bio:

Howard Pressman, CFP® is a financial advisor with Egan, Berger & Weiner, LLC, an independent financial services firm. Howard helps young families, those nearing retirement and those already in retirement make sense of the seemingly complex world of personal finance. Howard has been a Hill resident for 19 years and can be reached by email at hpressman@ebwllc.com. Securities and Investment Advisory Services offered through ING Financial Partners, Inc. Member SIPC. Egan, Berger & Weiner, LLC is not a subsidiary of nor controlled by ING Financial Partners, Inc. ★

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There's a greater commitment to safety and more reliable service. We've made it our goal to give you the best bus service in the nation.



Steve Cottes
Metrobus Mechanic

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